

general management plan  
land protection plan  
wilderness suitability review

# KOBUK VALLEY

NATIONAL PARK / ALASKA



## WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT

Section 701 of ANILCA designated approximately 190,000 acres of Kobuk Valley National Park as wilderness and directed that this wilderness be managed in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964, except as otherwise expressly provided for in ANILCA. The area designated as wilderness is located in the southeastern portion of the park, to the south of the Kobuk River and including the Great and Little Kobuk Sand Dunes (some of these lands have been selected by the NANA Regional Corporation). The Wilderness Act states that wilderness areas:

...shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness.

Wilderness is then defined, in part, as:

an area of undeveloped federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitations, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions ....

ANILCA made certain exceptions to the Wilderness Act which apply only to management of wilderness areas in Alaska. These are summarized below:

Section 1110(a) provides that the secretary shall permit on conservation system units, which by definition in section 102(4) includes units of the national wilderness preservation system, the following uses:

...the use of snowmachines (during periods of adequate snow cover...), motorboats, airplanes and nonmotorized surface transportation methods for traditional activities (where such activities are permitted by this Act or other law) and for travel to and from villages and homesites. Such use shall be subject to reasonable regulations by the Secretary to protect the natural and other values of the (wilderness)... areas, and shall not be prohibited unless, after notice and hearing in the vicinity of the affected unit or area, the Secretary finds that such use would be detrimental to the resource values of the unit or area.

The National Park Service has incorporated this provision into the Code of Federal Regulations (43 CFR 36.11) covering administration of units in Alaska (see appendix A).

Airplanes, motorboats, and snowmachines are used within the park, including the designated wilderness area of the park. The continued use of these forms of motorized equipment throughout the park, including in the designated wilderness, is allowed under the above-cited sections of ANILCA and the federal regulations. Helicopter landings are prohibited on park lands except in compliance with a permit issued by the superintendent. No other forms of motorized access are permitted except as provided by ANILCA sections 1110 and 1111.

Section 1310 provides, subject to reasonable regulation, for access to and the operation, maintenance, and establishment of air and water navigation aids, communications sites and related facilities, and facilities for weather, climate, and fisheries research and monitoring in wilderness areas.

The Wilderness Act, section 4(c), states that, subject to existing private rights, there shall be:

...no commercial enterprise and no permanent road within any wilderness area... and except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for purposes of this Act (including measures required in emergencies involving health and safety of persons within the area), there shall be no temporary road... and no structure or installation within the area.

Section 1303 of ANILCA, however, authorizes the use and occupancy of cabins or other structures in national park system units under a permit system. Cabins or other structures not under a permit system may be used for official government business, for emergencies involving health and safety, and for general public use. Also under section 1303, the secretary of the interior may permit the construction and maintenance of cabins or other structures if he determines that the use is necessary to reasonable subsistence use. Section 1315 of ANILCA contains more specific direction on management of wilderness. This section states:

Previously existing public use cabins within wilderness . . . may be permitted to continue and may be maintained or replaced subject to such restrictions as the Secretary deems necessary to preserve the wilderness character of the area.

Section 1315 also allows the construction of new cabins and shelters if necessary for the protection of public health and safety. Appropriate committees of Congress must be notified of the intent to remove existing, or construct new public use cabins or shelters in wilderness.

The application and decision-making process established in title XI of ANILCA for siting of transportation and utility systems applies to the entire park, including areas designated as wilderness.

#### WILDERNESS SUITABILITY REVIEW

Section 1317(a) of ANILCA directs that a review be made of the suitability for preservation as wilderness of all lands within units of the national park system in Alaska not so designated by the act. Section 1317(b) specifies that "the Secretary shall conduct his review, and the President shall advise the United States Senate and House of Representatives of his recommendations, in accordance with the provisions of sections 3(c) and (d) of the Wilderness Act." The secretary is to complete his review by December 2, 1985.

Recommendations on whether to designate suitable areas as wilderness will be made following completion of the general management plan. An environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared as part of the recommendation process. The public will have the opportunity to review and comment on these

recommendations, and public hearings will be held. Upon completion of the EIS and secretarial review, the president will make his recommendations to Congress.

The Wilderness Act of 1964 defines wilderness as follows:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act as an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Wilderness suitability criteria were developed that reflect the definition of wilderness contained in the Wilderness Act and the provisions of ANILCA specific to wilderness areas in Alaska. These criteria were applied to all nonwilderness lands in the park to determine their suitability for designation. These criteria relate to the physical character of the land and current land status. Factors such as appropriateness for management as wilderness and state and local concerns with wilderness management will be considered during formulation of the recommendations that follow completion of the general management plan.

For a particular tract of land to be determined suitable for wilderness designation it must meet all the following suitability criteria:

#### Land Status

Federal land - suitable

Federal land under application or selection - suitability pending

State and private land, patented or tentatively approved - not suitable

Private ownership of subsurface estate - not suitable

#### Mining Development

Areas with minor ground disturbances from past mining activities - suitable

Areas with major past ground disturbances from mining activities - not suitable

Current mining activities and ground disturbances - not suitable

#### Roads and ORV Trails

Unimproved roads or ORV trails that are unused or little used by motor vehicles - suitable

Improved roads and ORV trails regularly used by motor vehicles - not suitable

#### Airstrips

Unimproved or minimally improved or maintained - suitable

Improved and maintained - not suitable

#### Cabins

Uninhabited structures; hunter, hiker and patrol cabins - suitable

Inhabited as a primary place of residence - not suitable

#### Size of Unit

Greater than 5,000 acres adjacent to existing wilderness, or of a manageable size - suitable

Less than 5,000 acres or of unmanageable size - not suitable

Of the approximately 1,750,380 acres comprising Kobuk Valley National Park, approximately 190,000 were designated as wilderness by ANILCA. The remaining undesignated lands are subject to the wilderness suitability review required by section 1317.

Using the above criteria, most of the unencumbered federal lands within the park not designated as wilderness are determined to be suitable for wilderness designation based on their present undeveloped and unimpaired state. Approximately 1,494,500 acres are determined suitable for wilderness designation. No major past or current mining developments, no improved roads or ATV trails, and no improved or maintained airstrips are on unencumbered federal lands within the park.

There is one inhabited cabin on federal land near the mouth of the Hunt River, and this location is unsuitable for wilderness designation. Approximately 62,567 acres of NANA Regional Corporation selections are in the park at the present time, and approximately 9,387 acres of lands are interimly conveyed to this corporation. Additionally, there are approximately 10,513 acres selected as cemetery and historical sites by NANA, 8,070 acres of native allotment applications or conveyances, and one 5-acre headquarters site in the park. There are also 10,596 acres of state lands in

R7W REW ROW R4W R3W R2W R1W R1E R2E R3E R4E R5E

# WILDERNESS SUITABILITY

## Kobuk Valley National Park

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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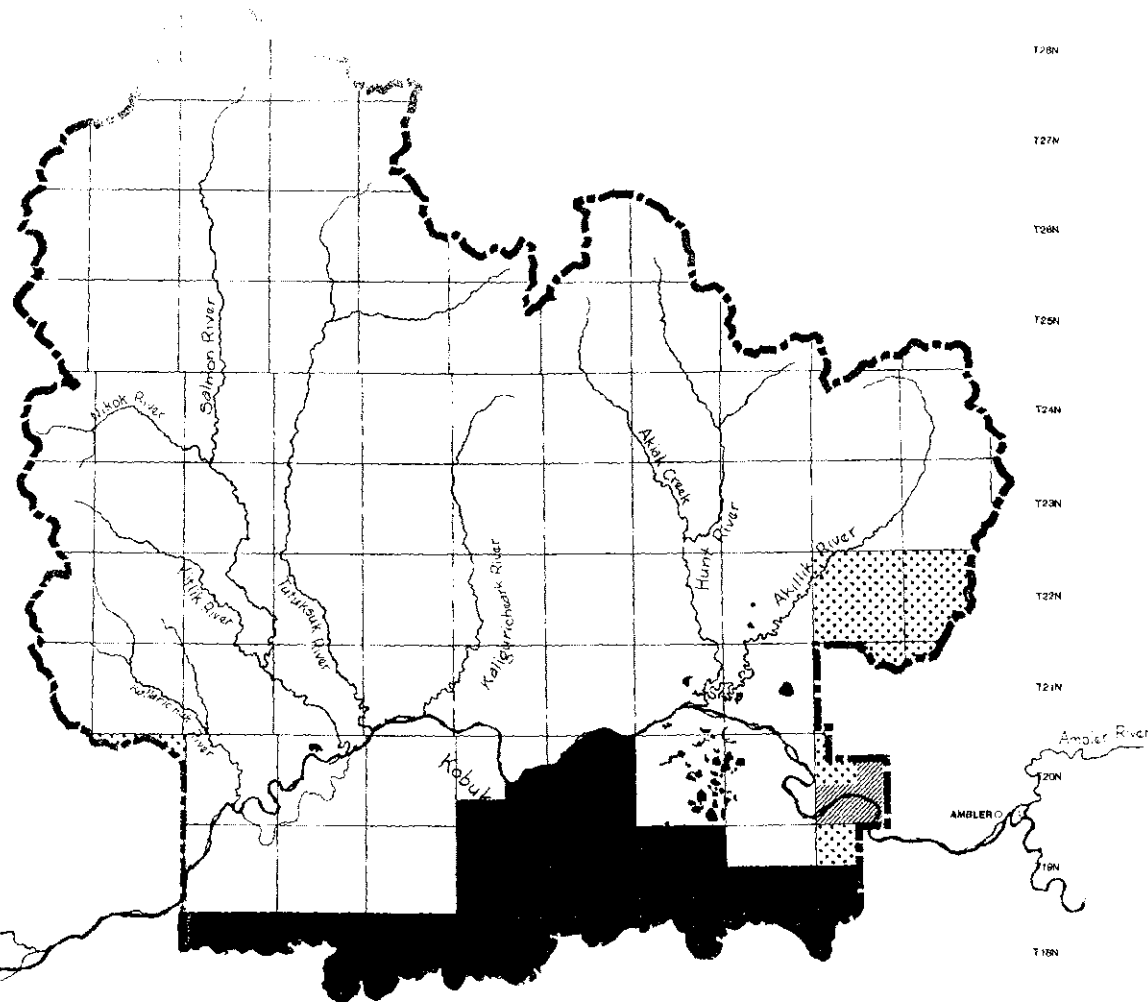
DESIGNATED WILDERNESS

WILDERNESS SUITABILITY PENDING

NOT SUITABLE

SUITABLE

NOTE: SMALL TRACT ENTRIES ARE NOT SHOWN ON THIS MAP - HOWEVER IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT PRIVATE LANDS ARE NOT SUITABLE FOR WILDERNESS DESIGNATION SEE LAND STATUS MAP



the park beneath the navigable Kobuk River. Any of these lands that have been conveyed, or may in the future be conveyed out of federal ownership, would be unsuitable for wilderness designation, whereas any of these lands that are ultimately retained in federal ownership would generally be suitable for wilderness designation (assuming that they would meet the "other suitability" criteria).

See the Wilderness Suitability map for an illustration of those lands determined to be suitable for wilderness designation. A corridor along the Kobuk River is shown as suitable for wilderness designation on this map although there are a number of small tract applications and conveyances there. In actuality, private lands in the Kobuk River corridor are unsuitable for wilderness designation, but such detail could not be illustrated on a map of this scale.

Changes in land status occurring between the time this plan is prepared and the time when the recommendations are made to the president and Congress will be reflected in those recommendations. A determination of suitability does not affect any pending selections or any other prior existing interests in lands. All future wilderness recommendations and any subsequent designations will be made subject to valid existing rights, including rights-of-way under RS 2477.

All lands determined suitable for wilderness designation will be managed under the terms of ANILCA to maintain the wilderness character and values of these lands until designation recommendations have been proposed and Congress has acted on these proposals.